

Conservatives and Liberals have different plans for Canada. Vote accordingly ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

One of the more curious aspects of this election is the way in which a rather sizable chunk of the Canadian commentariat has deemed this election to be trivial or unimportant. It's one thing to question the timing and even the motivation behind the election call, but it's quite another to downplay the very stark differences between the two parties in contention to form government.

Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole and his team have done an admirable job of presenting him as a centrist, moderate leader — basically the direct opposite of the “true blue” Conservative he claimed to be when running for leader of the party. However, that doesn't negate the fact that the Conservatives and the Liberals have very different policies and philosophies on everything from vaccinations and climate change to child care and abortion.

Last week, I wrote about how the Conservative approach to vaccinations — by treating it as an issue of personal choice instead of a collective responsibility — would invariably prolong the pandemic. Additionally, O'Toole continues to refuse to state how many of his candidates are currently vaccinated. This is not some abstract philosophical difference. If there are indeed disagreements within caucus when it comes to vaccinations, Canadians have a right to know. One only needs to look to the caucus divisions clearly present in Alberta to realize that having a divided caucus on fundamental issues of public health and science can lead to disastrous consequences.

On climate change, the Conservatives have finally been dragged into our new climate reality kicking and screaming. O'Toole should indeed get credit for finally putting up something resembling a climate change plan. But that's as far as the credit should go, given the shallowness of the Tory approach to climate change. Should O'Toole and the Conservatives form the next government, one of their first acts on the international stage would be to violate the Paris Agreement by lowering Canada's emissions target. It's also worth keeping in mind that at their policy convention in March of this year, Conservative members voted against formally recognizing the reality of climate change in its official policy declaration, which shouldn't surprise anyone given that the current Conservative caucus is rife with climate change skeptics and deniers.

O'Toole claims he is pro-choice. This is despite his active courting of the anti-choice and social conservative vote during his leadership race, which is why most astute observers of reproductive rights were raising an eyebrow at the explicit mention of “conscience rights” for health-care workers in the Conservative party platform.

Yet aside from the winking and nudging to voters who do not believe women should have full autonomy over their own bodies, the more worrying aspect of this is not O'Toole's flip-flop, but his own party's views on the subject. A majority of the Conservative caucus voted in favour of limiting abortion access as recently as June of this year, including his own hand-picked deputy leader, and O'Toole has repeatedly declined to confirm whether he will allow members of his caucus to introduce bills that would limit abortion access.

On child care, the Conservatives would rip up the eight provincial and territorial agreements already signed by the federal government on implementing a subsidized \$10-a-day, national child-care plan. The difference in savings for middle-income families under the two plans are glaring. According to calculations done by Reuters, the median cost for toddler care in Toronto would drop from \$1,578 a month to \$210 a month under the Liberal plan, compared to \$1,178 under the Conservative plan. There is perhaps no bigger piece to our country's economic recovery than ensuring that affordable child care is made available so that the women who were forced to leave the workforce during the pandemic to care for their children can once again return.

You can think this election is ill-timed, and ultimately should not have been called. But you can't reasonably deduce there are not critical differences between the two leading parties, or that this election won't have substantive consequences on a range of issues. Elections matter. Vote accordingly.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: federal election 2021 ^[4]

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